

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 OES-07 IO-13 /082 W  
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R 011250Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7686  
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
AMEMBASSY DACCA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KABUL  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMCONSUL BOMBAY  
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
AMCONSUL MADRAS  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 17063

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, IN  
SUBJECT: ANDHRA PRADESH: THE POLITICS OF THE CYCLONE AND  
ITS AFTERMATH

REF: MADRAS 1821 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: A SMALL POLITICAL CYCLONE FOLLOWED IN THE WAKE OF  
THE NATURAL ONE WHICH STRUCK ANDHRA PRADESH ON NOVEMBER 19 AS  
NATIONAL JANATA PARTY LEADERS AND DISSIDENT CONGRESS ELEMENTS  
SOUGHT TO GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE FROM THE STORM. THE SKIR-  
MISHING PARTIES AND FACTIONS APPEAR TO BE MANEUVERING FOR  
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POSITION IN ANTICIPATION OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS NEXT  
SPRING. JANATA LEADERS ACCUSED THE CONGRESS STATE GOVERNMENT  
OF CHIEF MINISTER J. VENGALA RAO OF "NEGLIGENCE" AND "INCOM-  
PETENCE" IN FAILING TO WARN AND EVACUATE PEOPLE AND IN MOUNT-  
ING INADEQUATE RELIEF MEASURES, A CHARGE WHICH VENGALA RAO  
TERMED POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THE  
GOI MIGHT IMPOSE PRESIDENT'S RULE TO FACILITATE RELIEF EFFORTS

(THUS ALSO PUTTING JANATA IN A BETTER POSITION FOR THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.) WE FEEL THIS IS UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, SINCE SUCH A MOVE WOULD SEEM OVERTLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. (PRESIDENT'S RULE IS ALSO RUMORED IN NEIGHBORING KARNATAKA, WHERE INTENSE FACTIONALISM BETWEEN PRO AND ANTI- MRS. GANDHI FORCES COULD ENDANGER THE URS MINISTRY.) THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE IN THE CONGRESS ALSO FIGURES IN THE POLITICS OF DISASTER, AS PRO-INDIRA DISSIDENTS IN ANDHRA SOUGHT TO UNDERMINE THE CHIEF MINISTER'S POSITION BY INVITING MRS. GANDHI TO TOUR THE STRICKEN AREAS. HER VISIT HAD MINIMAL IMPACT, HOWEVER, AND MAY PUSH VENGALA RAO EVEN CLOSER TO THE ANTI-MRS. GANDHI CAMP. THE DISSIDENTS SUPPORTING HER IN THE STATE APPEAR TO HAVE GAINED LITTLE. SEVERAL HAVE RESIGNED FROM VENGALA RAO'S GOVERNMENT, AND AN OPEN BREAK MAY OCCUR. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE AT THIS POINT HOW THE DEVASTATION AND THE RESULTING CONTROVERSIES WILL AFFECT RELATIVE POLITICAL POSITIONS AS ANDHRA PREPARES FOR THE ASSEMBLY POLL. JANATA CRITICISM OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S RELIEF EFFORTS MAY SCORE SOME POINTS, AND A SUCCESSFUL RELIEF OPERATION MOUNTED BY GOI AGENCIES WOULD ALMOST SURELY BE EXPLOITED BY THE JANATA. HOWEVER, THERE IS A FEELING THAT THE RULING PARTY SHOULD NOT PRESS ITS CASE TOO HARD ON THIS ISSUE, SINCE IT WOULD SEEM TO BE A CALLOUS ATTEMPT TO CASH IN ON PEOPLE'S MISERIES FOR POLITICAL ENDS. THIS MESSAGE INCLUDES CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CONGEN MADRAS. END SUMMARY

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1. A SMALL POLITICAL CYCLONE HAS FOLLOWED IN THE WAKE OF THE NATURAL ONE WHICH STRUCK ANDHRA PRADESH ON NOVEMBER 19 AS NATIONAL JANATA LEADERS AND DISSIDENT CONGRESS ELEMENTS IN THE STATE HAVE SOUGHT TO GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE OUT OF THE STORM.

2. MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS STARTED SHORTLY AFTER THE FULL EXTENT OF THE DISASTER BECAME APPARENT WHEN A JUNIOR MINISTER IN DESAI'S GOVERNMENT CHARGED THE VENGALA RAO ADMINISTRATION WITH FAILING TO ADEQUATELY WARN AND EVACUATE PERSONS IN THE CYCLONE'S PATH. AFTER RETURNING FROM A TOUR OF THE STRICKEN AREA, DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM CLAIMED THAT THE ANDHRA GOVERNMENT WAS SLOW IN REACTING TO THE DISASTER AND THAT THE CHIEF MINISTER HESITATED FOUR DAYS BEFORE REQUESTING ARMY ASSISTANCE. A FACT-FINDING JANATA DELEGATION ACCUSED THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF "CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE" IN ITS RELIEF EFFORTS AND CONCLUDED THAT IT HAD LOST THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE. JANATA PRESIDENT CHANDRA SHEKHAR, ALSO ON A TOUR OF THE AREA, SAID THAT THE ANDHRA GOVERNMENT WAS "INCOMPETENT" TO CARRY OUT ADEQUATE RELIEF MEASURES. VENGALA RAO AND CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY PARTY LEADER Y.B. CHAVAN RETORTED THAT THE JANATA WAS USING THE NATURAL DISASTER FOR POLITICAL ENDS.

(PRIME MINISTER DESAI, WHO DID NOT VISIT THE STRICKEN AREA UNTIL NOVEMBER 30, HAS REFRAINED FROM THE RECRIMINATION EXCHANGE.)

3. THE JANATA CRITICISM OF THE VENGALA RAO GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED INACTION FUELED SPECULATION THAT THE GOI MIGHT IMPOSE PRESIDENT'S RULE IN THE STATE IN ORDER TO MOUNT CENTRALLY-DIRECTED RELIEF OPERATIONS (AND, PRESUMABLY, TO PUT JANATA IN A MORE PROMISING POSITION FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, SCHEDULED FOR THE SPRING.) OBSERVERS IN DELHI, HOWEVER, FEEL THAT THIS STEP IS UNLIKELY, IF ONLY BECAUSE THE CENTER -- RATHER THAN VENGALA RAO'S REGIME -- COULD THEN BE FAULTED FOR INADEQUATE RELIEF MEASURES. IN ADDITION, THERE IS A STRONG FEELING HERE, REFLECTED IN CRITICAL PRESS EDITORIALS, THAT

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THE JANATA GOVERNMENT IN DELHI HAS OVERREACHED ITSELF IN SNIPING AT THE ANDHRA ADMINISTRATION AND IN MAKING THE ISSUE OF ASSISTING DISTRESSED PERSONS A POLITICAL FOOTBALL. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOI MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE WOULD BE CONSIDERED OBVIOUSLY POLITICALLY CONTRIVED.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
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R 011250Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7687  
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
AMEMBASSY DACCA  
KMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 9792  
AMEMBASSY KABUL  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMCONSUL BOMBAY  
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 17063

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

(4. SPECULATION ABOUT PRESIDENT'S RULE IS ALSO GROWING IN THE NEIGHBORING STATE OF KARNATAKA, WHERE ANOTHER SMALL POLITICAL CYCLONE HAS BEEN BUILDING UP. FOLLOWING THE FAILURE OF HIS MOVE TO "REQUISITION" AN AICC SESSION TO INSTALL MRS. GANDHI AS CONGRESS PRESIDENT, CHIEF MINISTER DEVRAJ URS HAS COME UNDER INCREASING ATTACK FOR "ANTI-PARTY ACTIVITIES" FROM A SIZEABLE GROUP OF HIS OWN CONGRESS MLA'S LED BY KARNATAKA PCC PRESIDENT K.H. PATIL. IF THE TWO FACTIONS CONTINUE ON THEIR COLLISION COURSE, THE URS MINISTRY COULD FALL AND PRESIDENT'S RULE IMPOSED.)

5. WHILE THE JANATA AND CONGRESS PARTIES WERE SKIRMISHING, THE ONGOING NATIONAL LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE WITHIN THE CONGRESS  
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AND ITS REVERBERATIONS IN THE STATE PARTY UNIT ALSO FIGURED IN THE POLITICS OF DISASTER. SUPPORTERS OF MRS. GANDHI IN THE ANDHRA CONGRESS, STRUKING BACK AT THE CHIEF MINISTER (AND HIS NATIONAL ALLY, CONGRESS PRESIDENT BRAHMANANDA REDDY) FOR REORGANIZING THE STATE CONGRESS BODY TO UNDERCUT THEM, INVITED THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER TO VISIT THE STATE. WITHOUT THE CHIEF MINISTER'S CLEARANCE, STATE HEALTH MINISTER K. RAJAMALLU, AN INDIRA LOYALIST, ESCORTED HER AROUND THE DISASTER AREA FOR TWO DAYS.

6. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENTS INDICATE THAT MRS. GANDHI'S TRIP WAS PROBABLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. IT APPEARS TO HAVE DONE NOTHING TO IMPROVE HER POSITION IN ANDHRA. SHE WAS POINTEDLY SNUBBED BY VENGALA RAO AND HER TRAVELS RECEIVED LITTLE PRESS COVERAGE IN DELHI OR THE SOUTH. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IN A STATE ONCE CONSIDERED ONE OF HER STRONGHOLDS, HER VISIT APPEARS TO HAVE GENERATED LITTLE ENTHUSIASM. THE TRIP REVEALED HER INCREASING ISOLATION IN ANDHRA BY SHOWING THAT HER SUPPORT THERE IS CONFINED TO A RELATIVELY SMALL GROUP OF DISSIDENT CONGRESSMEN. AT THE SAME TIME, IT MAY WELL HAVE PUSHED VENGALA RAO EVEN CLOSER TO BRAHMANANDA REDDY IN THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP DISPUTE.

7. THE PRO-INDIRA DISSIDENTS IN THE STATE CONGRESS UNIT APPARENTLY HAVE GAINED LITTLE FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN ILL-TIMED MANEUVER, AND THE CONGRESS IN ANDHRA MAY BE HEADING FOR THE SAME SORT OF OPEN BREAK THAT IS APPROACHING IN KARNATAKA. THE

CHIEF MINISTER FORCED RAJAMALLU TO RESIGN FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOR NEGLECTING HIS HEALTH MINISTRY DUTIES WHILE HOBNOBBING WITH MRS. GANDHI. ACCORDING TO LATE NEWS REPORTS, FIVE MINISTERS IN VENGALA RAO'S CABINET AND TWO SENIOR APPOINTED OFFICIALS HAVE JUST SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS. ALMOST ALL OF THESE SEVEN APPEAR TO BE SUPPORTERS OF MRS. CONFIDENTIAL

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GANDHI, AS THEY HAD WELCOMED AND ACCOMPANIED HER ON HER TOUR OF THE STRICKEN AREA. THESE DISSIDENTS MAY FOR A TIME CLUSTER AROUND ANDHRA CONGRESS LEADER (AND FORMER U.P. GOVERNOR) M. CHENNA REDDY, WHO APPARENTLY HAS JOINED THE PRO-INDIRA CAMP. THEIR LONGER RANGE PLANS ARE UNCLEAR, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THEY MIGHT FORM A REGIONAL PARTY PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE TO MRS. GANDHI. (A SIMILAR DEVELOPMENT MAY BE IMMINENT IN KARNATAKA.) WE ARE NOT SURE HOW THESE RESIGNATIONS WILL AFFECT THE STABILITY OF VENGALA RAO'S GOVERNMENT, WHICH STILL INCLUDES 29 MINISTERS PRESUMABLY INTERESTED IN RETAINING THEIR CHAIRS. THE DESAI GOVERNMENT COULD, OF COURSE, USE THE RESIGNATIONS AS A PRETEXT FOR IMPOSING PRESIDENT'S RULE, BUT WE STILL FEEL THIS IS UNLIKELY.

8. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE AT THIS POINT HOW THE CYCLONE DEVASTATION AND THE RESULTING CONTROVERSIES OVER RELIEF OPERATIONS WILL AFFECT THE POLITICAL BALANCE OF POWER AND POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS AS THE STATE PREPARES FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS EARLY NEXT YEAR. THE JANATA CRITICISM MAY SCORE SOME POINTS AGAINST VENGALA RAO. HIS GOVERNMENT'S STANDING IN POPULAR EYES MAY HAVE WEAKENED SOMEWHAT SINCE IT WAS IN FACT SLOW IN GEARING UP ITS RELIEF EFFORT. STILL, VENGALA RAO'S ADMINISTRATION WAS PROBABLY NO LESS WELL PREPARED THAN PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAD FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS AT THE CENTER.

9. THE JANATA PARTY MAY HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED SLIGHTLY BY PICKING UP VENGALA RAO'S LOSS. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE COURSE OF THE GOI'S OWN RELIEF EFFORTS IN COMING WEEKS. A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION MOUNTED BY THE CENTER, COULD BE A MAJOR BOOST AND WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BECOME A FACTOR IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTION CAMPAIGN. SNIPING BY NATIONAL JANATA FIGURES IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE, OBVIOUSLY LEAVING THE WAY OPEN FOR THE RULING PARTY TO TAKE CREDIT FOR WHAT IS DONE BY THE GOI FROM THIS POINT ONWARD AND REMINDING THE PEOPLE THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DEFICIENT. AS NOTED EARLIER, HOWEVER, SUCH A STRATEGY COULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE IF PRESSED  
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TOO HARD, SINCE IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE A BLATANT ATTEMPT TO  
CASH IN ON PEOPLE'S MISERIES FOR POLITICAL ENDS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
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